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U.S. Farm Security Admin.

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MIGRANT CAMP RECORDINGS

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These recordings, part of a collection made for the Farm Security Administration in the migrant camps of California and in parts of Arizona, have been chosen with two ideas in mind; to give as vivid an impression as possible of the wide variety of native culture encountered, and to suggest the most effective use of such documentary material. For their own voices demonstrate more convincingly than any commentator can, how deeply rooted in American traditions are these uprooted citizens.

Here are the voices of families, like the Franklins and the Kings, who stick together in spite of hell and high water, and move on, singing together. Old songs that frequently constitute all that remains of the possessions they set out with, and new songs they have improvised out of a new situation. Here are the voices of their children, and other people's children, singing the current tunes with all the romantic hope of youth. Here too are the voices and characteristic rhythms of our Spanish-speaking natives, to remind us that the "Round Up" and the "Ranch" began with them. And, finally, here are the voices of individuals and groups from all parts of our land who use such tunes as they know or can invent, with such words as they command, with such courage as they can summon, to express their suffering, their protest, and their simple love of life.

MARGARET VALIANT

Record No. 5056

I'd Rather Not Be on Relief
(Camp Shafter, California)

Wanderers of the Wasteland
(Casa Grande, Arizona)

Down in Ole St. Francis Bottom
(Tucson, Arizona)

Record No. 5057

Arkansas
(Camp Calipatria, California)

Ole Blue
(Camp Indio, California)

Valley of the Sun
(Camp Calipatria, California)

Record No. 5058

El Arreo (The Round Up)
(Tucson, Arizona)

Goin' Down the Road Feelin' Bad
(Camp Brawley, California)

Record No. 5059

California Blues
(Camp Brawley, California)

Eighth Day of January
(Camp Indio, California)

Ole Joe Clark
(Camp Indio, California)

Jew's Harp Solo
(Camp Visalia, California)

Record No. 5060

Dear Old Western Home
(Camp Calipatria, California)

Tap Dance
(Camp Visalia, California)

Rancho Grande
(Phoenix, Arizona)

Record No. 5061

C C C Blues
(Camp Brawley, California)

No Home for the Poor
(Tempe, Arizona)

Drunken Hiccups
(Camp Brawley, California)

Record No. 5063

Bingo Farm
(Camp Calipatria, California)

The False Lover
(Tempe, Arizona)

Record No. 5064

Atotonilco
(Tucson, Arizona)

On the Banks of the Sweet Bondee
(Casa Grande Valley Farms
Coolidge, Arizona.)

OCT 19 1938

M.H.

- MIGRANT CAMP RECORDINGS -

Record No. 5056

"I'd Rather Not Be on Relief". Original song by Lester Hunter, an agricultural worker, in Shafter, California. It was written for the Christmas party for 8,000 children of agricultural workers which was held at the F.S.A. camp at Shafter, December 24, 1938. The song is sung by the composer.

I'd Rather Not Be on Relief

We go around all dressed in rags
While the rest of the world goes neat,
And we have to be satisfied
With half enough to eat.
We have to live in lean-tos,
Or else we live in a tent,
For when we buy our bread and beans
There's nothing left for rent.

Chorus:

I'd rather not be on the rolls of relief,
Or work on the W.P.A.,
We'd rather work for the farmer
If the farmer could raise the pay;
Then the farmer could plant more cotton
And he'd get more money for spuds,
Instead of wearing patches
We'd dress up in new duds.

From the east and west and north and south
Like a swarm of bees we come;
The migratory workers
Are worse off than the bum.
We go to Mr. Farmer
And ask him what he'll pay
He says: "You gypsy workers
Can live on a buck a day."

Chorus

We don't ask for luxuries
Or even a feather bed,
But we're bound to raise the dickens
While our Families are underfed.
Now the winter is on us
And the cotton picking is done,
What are we going to live on
While we're waiting for spuds to come?

Chorus

Now if you will excuse me
I'll bring my song to an end
I've got to go and chunk a crack
Where the howling wind comes in.
The times are going to better
And I guess you'd like to know
I'll tell you all about it
I've joined the C.I.O.

Chorus

* * * * *

"Wanderers of the Wasteland", sung by two brothers and a sister, aged 18, 20, and 22, might be considered symbolic of the migrant trek. The singers are Bernice, Elvern and J. C. McGee, of Casa Grande Valley Farms, Arizona.

Wanderers of the Wasteland

We are wanderers of the wasteland
My lop-eared mule, my broken-down
horse and me;
Always traveling going nowhere
Over the hills and over the fields
so free.
When I was young, I used to be
A high-falootin', rootin' tootin'
son of a gun
From out in Wyoming.
I loved a gal, I loved a gal,
She loved my pal, she loved my pal.
So I saddled my nag, an' packed my bag
And started out to roaming;
Now we're just a lonely trio
Without a friend we travel endlessly;
We are wanderers of the wasteland
My lop-eared mule, my broken-down
horse and me.

Record No. 5056 Cont.

"Down in Ole St. Francis Bottom" was sung in Tucson, Arizona, by Agnes Cunningham, who attributes it to an eleven-year old daughter of an Arkansas share-cropper. It commemorates the big flood in Arkansas.

Down in Ole St. Francis Bottom

'Way down in ole St. Francis Bottom
Where they call it the Devil's Den
Many a poor tenant has left their home
And me, Oh God, I'm one.

About the twentieth of January
When God sent a great big flood
It run the planters from their
 beautiful homes
And now they live in tents.

(Record Ends Here)

The planter said to the tenant one day:
"Oh boy, how do you like this? "
"Boss, it ain't a hurtin' me."
The tenant answered him.

"If you would live in some refugee camp
Or in some tenant's shack
You'd learn not be afeard of cold
Or fear the shining sun.

"Oh boss, don't you see where you done
wrong

When you run me outa my shack?
I had to build me a home
Out of my ole pick sack."

Record No. 5057

"Arkansas". Introduction from the record:
"Folks, this is the King family. Now we
come clean from Arkansas, we did. I guess
we are about the first folks that ever did
come clean from Arkansas. Now my family
consists of five. The least boy plays

the mandolin, the oldest one is 20 years old. He plays the guitar. The least one, ten, plays the mandolin, the one named Billy plays the big bull fiddle, and then the girl here she plays the violin, or fiddle, and I play the tenor banjo myself. Now this song we are going to sing for you is a song I composed about the different kinds of fruit and things we find in Arkansas."

Arkansas

Ol' Arkansas' got something that
 Nowhere else has got;
 Ol' Arkansas's got something, now
 listen while I tell you what;
 Peaches, 'Lasses, Sassafras, and all
 kinds of beans
 Peanuts, pumpkins, buttermilk, and good
 ol' turnip greens;
 Hickory nuts an' huckleberries, wild
 onions, 'simmons and parsnips.
 Ol' Arkansas's got something that nowher
 else has got;
 Ol' Arkansas's got something, now
 listen while I tell you what:
 Tobacco, corn and cotton, mellons and
 red river peas,
 Turnips, spinach, cucumbers, poke
 salad to your knees,
 Alfalfa, kafir corn and sorghum . . .

* * * * *

"Ole Blue" is sung by four members of the Franklin family -- papa, mama and two daughters -- at the government camp at Indio, California. At first, the Franklins said they couldn't sing it, because the son, who imitated the dog, was at school (the remainder of the family was illiterate). At a request for volunteers to fill in, many were eliminated before the Franklins - and the crowd - were satisfied with the proper houn' dog sounds.

Section 10. 1900

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Section 11. 1901

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Section 12. 1902

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Section 13. 1903

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Section 14. 1904

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Section 15. 1905

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Section 16. 1906

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Ole Blue

I had a little dog, and his name
was "Blue"
I'll tell to you what he would do
He'd leave home every night about dark
Wouldn't be gone long till you'd hear
him bark
Ole Blue, you rascal you, Ole Blue

One time he ran, when he got free
He got a big possum up a white oak tree
Oh Blue, you rascal you, Ole Blue
Gonna climb up there and get him down
I'll have him cooked good an' brown
Sweet potatoes laid all around
and around
Ole Blue, you rascal you, Ole Blue

One day Ole Blue, he take'n got sick
We sent for the doctor, and we sent
for him quick
For Blue, you rascal you, Ole Blue
Ole Blue he died and he died so hard
He scratched little holes all over the yard
Ole Blue, you rascal you, Ole Blue.

We dug his grave in a shady place
And covered his grave with a possum
face
Ole Blue, you rascal you, Ole Blue
We dug his grave with a silver spade
And let him down with a golden chain
Every link of that chain slipped through
my hand
I'll call his name
Ole Blue, you rascal you, Ole Blue

When I come lay my banjo down
And go to heaven and wear a crown
You Blue, you rascal you, Ole Blue
When I get there I know what I'll do
I'll get my horn and I'll call for Blue
"Heah Blue! Yeah, Blue, you rascal you,
Ole Blue.

"Valley of the Sun". A modern song
of the desert as sung, in the modern way
by sixteen-year old Julia King, at
Camp Brawley, California.

Valley of the Sun

You can stroll every night
In the twinkling light
In the valley of the sun;
It's a real place to spoon
'Neath the Arizona moon
In the valley of the sun.

From the sweet balmy air
On the desert so fair
And it seems like a heaven to me
And the sweetest perfume
When the cactus are in bloom
In the valley of the sun.

* * * * *

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"El Arreo" ("The Round Up") reminds us that Spanish cowboys preceded American cowboys, and - to judge by this song - exceeded them, too. It is sung, with two guitars as accompaniment, by four Spanish-speaking natives of Tucson, Arizona.

El Arreo

* * * * *

"Goin' Down the Road Feelin' Bad" is called the song of the "Okies", but it is sung in some variation by nearly everyone. Here it is sung by the crowd - in which almost every state in the Union is represented - at Camp Brawley, California.

Goin' Down the Road Feelin' Bad

I'm goin' down the road feelin' bad,
I'm goin' down the road feelin' bad,
I'm goin' down the road feelin' bad,
Lawd, Lawd,
An' I ain't gonna be treated this-a-way.

They fed me on corn bread and beans,
They fed me on corn bread and beans,
They fed me on corn bread and beans,
Lawd, Lawd,
An' I ain't gonna be treated this-a-way.

I'm goin' where the climate suits my
clothes,
I'm goin' where the climate suits my
clothes,
I'm goin' where the climate suits my
clothes,
Lawd, Lawd,
An' I ain't gonna be treated this-a-way.

I'm goin' where the sunshines every day,
I'm goin' where the sunshines every day,
I'm goin' where the sunshines every day,
Lawd, Lawd,
An' I ain't gonna be treated this-a-way.

I ain't gonna work 'taters anymore,
I ain't gonna work 'taters anymore,
I ain't gonna work 'taters anymore,
Lawd, Lawd,
An' I ain't gonna be treated this-a-way.

(Record ends here)

So I'm goin' down the road feelin' bad,
I'm goin' down the road feelin' bad,
I'm goin' down the road feelin' bad,
Lawd, Lawd,
An' I ain't gonna be treated this-a-way.

(To this tune the C.I.O. locals around Bakersfield have written verses about their "lost cause" -- the Bakersfield cotton strike.)

Picking cotton on my knees,
I'm picking cotton on my knees,
I'm picking cotton on my knees,
Lawd, Lawd,
We ain't gonna be treated this-a-way.

We asked the farmers for a raise,
We asked the farmers for a raise,
We asked the farmers for a raise,
Lawd, Lawd,
We ain't gonna be treated this-a-way.

But we had to pick cotton for six bits,
We had to pick cotton for six bits,
We had to pick cotton for six bits,
Lawd, Lawd,
And we ain't gonna be treated this-a-way.

Then we had to organize,
Then we had to organize,
Then we had to organize, Lawd, Lawd,
'Cause we ain't gonna be treated this-a-way

O come and join the C.I.O.,
O come and join the C.I.O.,
O come and join the C.I.O., Lawd, Lawd,
We ain't gonna be treated this-a-way.

A California version of the Blues, with its poignant final verse, is sung by "Curley" Reeves, sixteen, at Camp Brawley, California.

California Blues

I'm gonna buy me a pistol
Just as long as I'm tall
Gonna buy me a pistol
Long as I'm tall
I'm gonna shoot poor Thelma
Just to see her jump and fall
(YODEL)

Sometimes I'm wearied
And sometimes I'm blue
Sometimes I'm wearied
An' sometimes I'm blue
You know what's the matter, honey,
It's all on account of you.
(YODEL)

Rather drink muddy water
An' sleep in a hollow log
Rather drink muddy water
An' sleep in a hollow log
Than to be in California
Treated like a dirty dog.
(YODEL)

* * * * *

The following three instrumental tunes are among the oldest and most widely known of indigenous American folk songs.

"The Eighth Day of January", celebrating Andrew Jackson's victory at New Orleans, is one of the oldest traditional fiddle tunes still played all over the country. For this recording, the fiddler, "Pa" Franklin, was assisted by Arthur McCowan on the harmonica, and by "Tex" and "Slim" on their guitars.

The Eighth Day of January

* * * * *

"Ole Joe Clark", another of the old indigenous tunes, is here sung by Jim Miels, accompanying himself on the guitar, with Neil Collin coming in with his version on the harmonica, and McGowan working out on the "bones".

Ole Joe Clark

* * * * *

Ernest Saxton's Jew's Harp solo not only sounds like "Turkey in the Straw", but his variation almost sounds like the turkey. Perhaps it's because Sexton is from Missouri.

Jew's Harp Solo

Record No. 5060

"Dear Old Western Home", sung by twelve-year old Billy, youngest member of the King family from Arkansas, was recorded in the Calipatria Migratory Camp in California.

My Dear Old Western Home

My dear old western home --
'Twas the very spot for a cowboy,
In those trails where I used to roam.
I'm going back to Texas,
To my dear old western home.

* * * * *

At Camp Visalia, California, was recorded this tap dance by twelve-year old Zanadia McCrea from Oklahoma, who "hopes to dance her way to success."

Tap Dance

* * * * *

Everyone sings "Rancho Grande", nearly everyone with a different interpretation. This version, by four Spanish-speaking boys of Phoenix, Arizona, is unusually gay and carefree.

Rancho Grande

Record No. 5061

"C C C Blues". Introduction from the record: "Folks, this is Jimmie Collins from Colorado. I learned this song from a boy friend of mine in Bowie, Arizona". (Jimmie was seventeen, and looking for work in Brawley, California).

C.C.C. Blues

There's a place for which I'm yearning
And my heart is made a-burning
The thought of home sweet home is dear to me.
Well, I thought my head was level,
But I see I played the Devil
When I took the pen and signed my name
in ink.

But I liked to leave my mother,
Dear old dad, my sis and brother;
Spend six months away from home in
the C C C
As for me it's been a lesson
And it's also been a blessin'
For it's proved just what a fool a
boy can be.

Every morning, noon and night,
It's a comical lookin' sight,
Just to see the boys line up like
kids in school.
An' the reason you can tell
When they ring that dinner bell,
Is that each one tries to act the
biggest fool.

I like the boys and all the bosses,
But I wish they'd get some hosses;
'Cause the truck driver drives like
gasoline was free.
When we're coming 'round the mountain
You can see us boys abouncin',
For somehow the place don't appeal
to me.

(Record Ends Here)

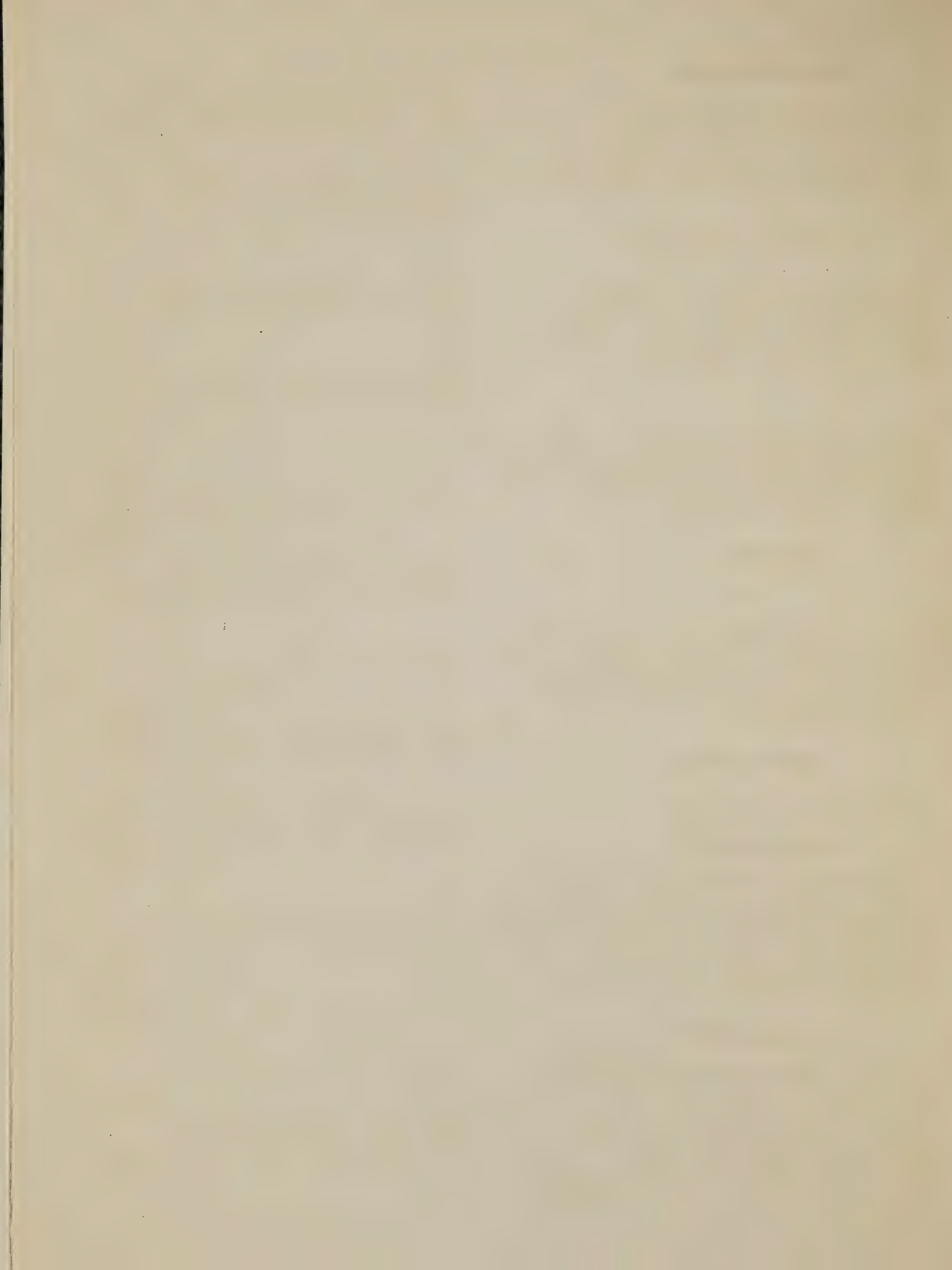
Six more months and I'll pack my
suitcase,
Give them boys one more foot race
To the depot down in Bowie, can't
you see.

As for me, I like old Texas
There those lads are wild and reckless
That's the only place that seems like
home to me.

I'll be glad when I get able
To put my feet under Ma's table
Look around and see my daddy smile at me
Then to be in the C C C, with the
cactus all around
And the rising stars in the mountains
high above.

When you join the U.S.A.
You've orders to obey
Even if they put you out pumping lead.
If you desert the red, white and blue
Uncle Sam is through with you
So I'll never hit the road before I
think.

* * * * *



Record No. 5061 cont.

"No Home for the Poor" is sung by
Mrs. Idah M. Howard, of Tempe, Arizona,
who learned it from her grandmother in
Arkansas forty-one years ago.

No Home for the Poor

"No home, no home", sobbed an orphan child
At the door of a rich man's hall,
As she trembling stood on the polished steps
And leaned on the marble wall.

Her clothes were thin and her feet were
bare,

The snow had covered her head.
"Oh give me a home", she feebly cried;
"A home and a piece of bread!"

"My father, alas, I never knew;"
And the tears dimmed her eyes so bright,
"My mother sleeps in a new-made grave -
"Tis an orphan that begs tonight."

(Record begins here)

The rich man slammed the door in her face
As his proud lips curled with scorn
As he scornfully said, "I've no bread
for the poor,
"No home nor bread for the poor."

"I'm afraid", she cried
As she sank on the steps,
And strove to cover her face
With her 'kerchief all covered with snow,
Yes, covered with the sleet and the snow.

Midnight rolled on, and the snow still fell,
the little girl in a bed of snow
And hear her cry, "Oh give me a home,
"Yes, give me a home from the cold."

The morning dawned and the snow still fell,
The little girl in her bed of snow
But her soul had gone to that home above
Where there's bread & a home for the poor.

* * * * *

"Drunken Hiccups", an old-time comedy
song, is performed, with startling effects,
by sixty-year old L. H. Davis, at Camp
Brawley, California.

Drunken Hiccups

A little good whiskey's a very good thing,
It makes a man jovial & whistle & sing;
A little too much is a very bad thing
(Hic!) Where shall I go?
(Hic!) Where shall I stay?
(Achew!) When shall I ever get home?

Oh, I'll go home, drink nothing no more
For when I am drinking - all over the
floor

(Hic!) Where shall I go?
(Hic!) Where shall I stay?
(Achew!) When shall I ever get home?

Oh, I'll go home, I'll go to my bed,
You'll hang an old whiskey keg over
my head,
And if I don't quit drinking, it'll
kill me stone-dead!

(Hic!) Where shall I go?
(Hic!) Where shall I stay?
(Achew!) When shall I ever get home?

I traveled along one very dark night;
I met a black dog, and I thought he
might bite;
Too tired to fight an' too drunk to run;
(Hic!) Where shall I go?
(Hic!) Where shall I stay?
(Achew!) When shall I ever get home?

Record No. 5063

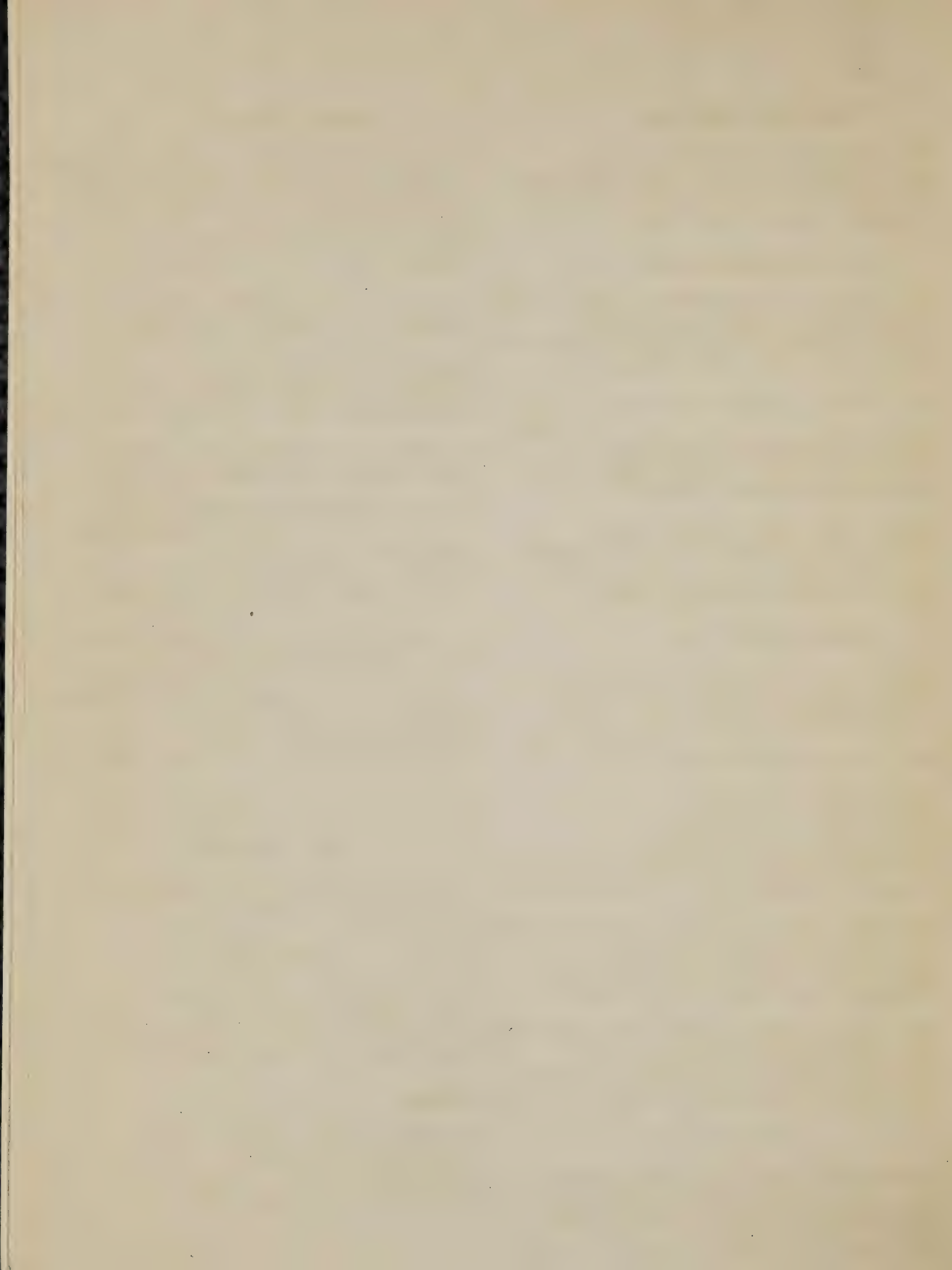
"Bingo Farm" is sung and played by the
King family from Arkansas.

Bingo Farm

Friends, I know you'll listen,
While I sing you this one,
'Cause I'm the link that's missin',
'Way down on the Bingo Farm.

Chorus:

Tra-ra-ra, Bingo, Bingo,
Tra-ra-ra, Bingo, Bingo,
Tra-ra-ra, Bingo,
'Way down on the Bingo Farm.



Record No. 5063 cont.

My girl her name is Dinah,
You can kiss her where you find her,
But you will have to mind her,
'Way down on the Bingo Farm.

Chorus

My girl I went to see her,
And she told me to leave there,
And never come back to see her,
'Way down on the Bingo Farm.

Chorus

I asked her if she loved me;
She said she was above me
And out at the door she shoved me,
'Way down on the Bingo Farm.

Chorus

I asked her if she'd marry me;
She said she'd rather tarry,
Well, I told her to go to Harry,
'Way down on the Bingo Farm.

Chorus

My father he's a panmer,
My mother she's a slammer,
She slung at me with a hammer,
'Way down on the Bingo Farm.

Chorus

My brother's name is Jacob,
He's awful hard to wake up,
An' that does raise a kick up,
'Way down on the Bingo Farm.

Chorus

* * * * *

"The False Lover", is sung by Mrs. Idah
M. Howard, Tempe, Arizona. Mrs. Howard
says: "This is the oldest-time song I know.
My mother sang this song when she was a
girl. I learned it from her 38 years
ago in Arkansas.

The False Lover

As I walked out one May morning
To hear pretty birds sing sweet
I leaned my back against the little closet
door
To see true lovers meet.

Kind Miss, won't you come in
And sit ye down by my side?
It's been three quarters of a year or more
since I've changed one word with
you

It's been three quarters of a year or more
since I've changed one word with you.

I'll not come in nor I won't sit down,
For I have but a moment of time;
You have wives, sweethearts, a-plenty of
your own, and your heart it's no more
mine.

You have wives, sweethearts, a-plenty of
your own, and your heart it's no more
mine.

You crossed your hands across my breast,
You made me believe by the false of your
soul that the sun rose in the West.
You made me believe by the false of your
soul that the sun rose in the West.

I'll climb as higher tree as you,
I'll rob as richer nest,
I'll come down safe and I'll catch not a
fall and I'll get who I love best.
I'll come down safe and I'll catch not a
fall and I'll get who I love best.

There's many a star o'er head, my dear,
There's many a grave below:
There's many a curse on a young man's head
that has served those poor girls so.
There's many a curse on a young man's head
that has served those poor girls so.

"Atotonilco" is another selection by
a group of Spanish-speaking natives
of Tucson, Arizona.

Atotonilco

* * * * *

"On the Banks of the Sweet Bondee" is an
old Irish ballad sung by Louise Holland,
17 year old high school girl at Casa
Grande Valley Farms, Coolidge, Arizona.

On the Banks of the Sweet Bondee

There was a farmer's daughter so beautiful

I've been told,

Her parents died & left her 10,000 pound
of gold,

She then lived with uncle who caused her

all her woe,

She then lived with uncle on the banks of
sweet Bondee.

Her uncle had a plowboy which Mary loved
so well,

Out in her uncle's garden sweet stories
of love would tell,

There was a wealthy warrior who often came
to see,

But Mary loved the plowboy best on the
banks of sweet Bondee.

Her uncle and the plowboy went out one
summer day

Went out their intentions sweet Willie
for to slay

Cried one to the other, we'll tie him to a
tree

And drown him now when the flood comes down on the banks
down on the banks of sweet Bondee.

The news came to Willie when he was all
alone.

He fought hard for his liberty although
t'was two to one;

He fought till the blood come streaming
down. "You've killed me now," said he.

I'd rather die as tarry here on the banks of
Sweet Bondee.

(Record Ends Here)

Her uncle rose next morning & straight way
he did go

He rapped upon her bedroom door & unto her
did say:

"Arise, my pretty Mary a lady you shall be,
"For the warrior is now waiting on the banks
of sweet Bondee."

He took her in his arms & he tried to turn
around.

He wore a sword & pistol beneath his
morning gown;

The sword she snatched from him, the pistol
she used so well.

She fired & killed the warrior on the banks
of sweet Bondee.

Her uncle heard the noises and hastened to
the sound,

"You now have killed the warrior I'll
oftake you your death round."

"Stand back, Stand back" cried Mary, "A
lady I shall be."

Her trigger flew and her uncle slew on the
banks of the sweet Bondee.

A doctor was sent for they knew.

"This man was killed likewise a young
lover to write her uncle's will.

He willed his gold to Mary; she fought so
manfully.

He closed his eyes to rise no more on the
banks of sweet Bondee.
